

County Council Meeting
July 21, 2015

Present: Blake Bunner, Bill Spaetti, Steve Winsett, Dave Kress, Todd Ruxer, Aaron Benton, Jack Kroeger, Attorney John Wetherill, Auditor Autumn Winkler

Meeting was called to order by President Bill Spaetti at 5:00 P.M.

Minutes

Bunner made a motion to approve the minutes from June 16th with the addition of Aaron Benton's name at the top and per Winsett request more detailed information about the OCRA grant. Kress seconded the motion, motion was approved.

Public Hearing

Hoosier Energy Abatement-Chuck Martindale

Tom Utter with the LEDC was in attendance to speak in favor of the Hoosier Energy Solar Panel project and the many benefits it could bring to our area.

Steve Seibert, CEO of Southern Indiana Power spoke in favor of Hoosier Energy and the solar project also. They are one of the 18 member cooperatives of Hoosier Energy. There were 36 sites submitted from just south of Indy and down for this project. Southern Indiana Power submitted a few sites in Perry and Spencer County. Decisions were made based on traffic counts and visibility. They feel very thankful that one of their sites was chosen.

Hoosier Energy is trying to diversify and get away from being solely coal energy. The site chosen is a 14 acre tract in Carter Twp. It is predicted to take 3 months start to finish for this project. The budget for this project is around \$3,000,000.00. Hoosier Energy had their Property Tax Accountant figure an estimate of what the tax benefit would be for the county and the figures were \$2,700.00/yr real property and \$63,000.00/yr improvements. This would result in a tax increase of \$5,000-\$6,000.00/yr and after the completion of the abatement an \$8,000-\$9,000.00/yr. increase. Martindale presented a resolution to declare the land an Economic Revitalization Area and to request approval of the abatement. The abatement would be for a 10 year period starting at 100% and decreasing each year by 10%. Kroeger stated that this would be the first time in all of his years on the council that an abatement was granted when there were no employees at the company. This type of request would not normally be considered for that reason, but we are not required to provide any infrastructure for this business. Spaetti stated that any taxpayers that use Southern Indiana Power/Hoosier Energy would benefit from the savings that Hoosier Energy is receiving and that hopefully they will pass those savings on to their customers. Benton explained that this is also a great benefit to the county, due to a 2.7 million dollar increase to our assessed base and an additional 17 times the tax revenue. Kress made a motion to approve Resolution 2015-06, confirming the adoption of a declaratory resolution designating an economic revitalization area for Hoosier Energy. Benton seconded the motion, motion was approved.

Ruxer made a motion to adjourn the public hearing. Benton seconded the motion, motion was approved. Hearing was adjourned at 5:25 P.M.

Regular Meeting

Meeting was called to order by President Bill Spaetti at 5:26 P.M

Additional Appropriations

Law Enforcement Fund

Dale Police Dept.	\$1500.00
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Prosecutor Dan Wilkinson requested an additional appropriation for \$1500.00 from the Law Enforcement Fund to assist with the cost of a new K-9 for the Dale Police Dept. Kress made a motion to approve the \$1500.00 additional from the Law Enforcement Fund. Kroeger seconded the motion, motion was approved.

COIT

Health Insurance

\$300,000.00

Auditor Winkler and the Board of Commissioners are requesting a \$300,000.00 additional appropriation from the COIT fund to pay health insurance expenses. All 2015 budgeted funds for health insurance have been depleted and there are no more dollars to pay this expense.

Winkler explained that there is no more money to pay claims or administrative bills and that money should be coming in from reinsurance, but there is no way to know when or how much. Winsett stated that he recently spoke to a Warrick County Councilman and was told that they were in the same situation a few years ago and they made the decision it needed to be bid out. He stated that they pretty much forced their Board of Commissioners to bid it out by not giving them any additional money. That is not what he suggests we do, but he has been fighting with the commissioners to bid it out with no success. All council members were in agreement that changes need to be made, as the county cannot afford to continue on this path. Winsett stated that at a recent meeting with himself, Kroeger, Spaetti, and Logsdon the comment was made that with our loss ratio so high, no one would want to give us a bid. He has made some phone calls and has companies waiting to bid. Kroeger stated there are 2 issues here and this situation is that we have to have the funds needed to pay the bills, but moving forward we are going to have to work on a solution. Kroeger made a motion to approve the \$300,000.00 additional from COIT for Health Insurance. Kress seconded the motion, motion approved with Winsett opposed. Winsett stated he will continue to vote no until they consent to bid out the insurance.

Health Dept.

\$5550.00

Donna Etienne is requesting an additional appropriation of \$3550.00 for the part time clerk position. There was not enough money budgeted for this position and by year end they will come up short. A request for \$2000.00 was also requested for legal fees. There have been several issues this year that have resulted in legal fees and there are possibilities of more. Benton made a motion to approve the \$5550.00 requested. Ruxer seconded the motion, motion was approved.

Mike Johannes & John Bowen – Town of Santa Claus

Johannes and Bowen came to do a presentation about the Town of Santa Claus trails project. This project is a \$10,000,000.00 project with 80% currently funded by State and Federal grants. Construction for this project will begin in late Fall and completion is anticipated by 2017. The hope for this project is that it will become incorporated with the national set of trails across the country. An organization, Trails of Santa Claus, Inc., has been established to assist with soliciting funds to complete the project. It is believed that this trail system will provide a large increase in tourism. Spencer County is well known for its tourism and these trails will only add to that.

4 separate trails are included in this project:

1. Yellig Park to Christmas Lake Trail
2. Lincoln Discover to National Park Trail
3. Westside Connector
4. East Side Connector

Johannes and Bowen are requesting a partnership with Spencer County and seeking \$400,000.00 to do the necessary road completion for CR 1650. CR 1625 is being abandoned and CR 1650 is being extended for this project. The tourism season is mainly in the Spring/Summer months and they feel this will cause an increase in the off-season. Bowen and Johannes presented many statistics and a large amount of information regarding this project. Kroeger stated that even though they are the fiscal body, he felt that the commissioners needed to work out the \$400,000.00 through the highway budget. Bowen stated he believed that the commissioners were in favor of it, but wanted the council approval on it also. Kroeger said that if the commissioners want to include this in their highway budget that is their decision to make. Spaetti ask Bowen and Johannes when the money would be needed, if they were able to come up with any funding. Johannes stated it would not be needed until 2016.

New Business

Ordinance Proposals

Wetherill explained that after speaking with Spaetti and Kroeger, he had prepared an ordinance to freeze benefits and an ordinance to freeze hiring for the time being. He stated these ordinances are presented merely as a topic of discussion, not as a recommendation from anyone. This would not affect replacing an employee in the event of someone leaving, but only for new hires. Kroeger stated that these ordinances are a wakeup call for where we are and that we have to get a handle on cash flow going forward. The first place to start with getting a handle

on this is budgeting. Kroeger stated that at a minimum these ordinances should be considered in an effort to cut cost. If the council makes the decision to pass the ordinances, they could be put in effect before budget time hits at the end of August. Winsett stated, "Aren't we kinda putting the cart before the horse?" We need to know how much trouble we are really in before taking such drastic measures. Spaetti and Kroeger stated again, this is just up for discussion. Kroeger stated that we have long term commitments to pay out of COIT and that we cannot continuously use those funds for health insurance. Benton asked if the insurance committee has adopted to increase the deductible for health insurance. Winsett stated that the insurance committee has not met for 3 or 4 months. Kroeger said that after speaking with some of the council and commissioners, that he felt all were in agreement that the deductible change was needed. Bunner stated that since the insurance committee was formed they have not wanted to make the hard decisions needed to take action. The insurance committee needs to seriously look into what changes need to be made, whether it be bidding it out or just making policy changes. Winsett said he has been trying to get the committee to bid it out, but that has not happened and now the committee has stopped meeting. Kroeger made a motion that Attorney Wetherill writes a letter to the commissioners and Attorney Lindsey requesting a joint meeting, recommending that they reactivate the insurance committee and provide the council with viable options for drastic cost reduction. Kress seconded the motion, motion was approved.

Ruxer made a motion to adjourn. Bunner seconded the motion, motion was approved.
Meeting was adjourned at 7:54 P.M.

President

Attest:

Auditor, Autumn Winkler
